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ABSTRACT

Four of the policy statements for vocational education developed by the Wisconsin Board of Vocational, Technical, and Adult Education reflect concerns shared in the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education. First, vocational education is accountable to the publics, namely students, employers, and state, local, and federal governments. Second, evaluation systems for vocational education are the responsibility of state and local units. Third, planning and implementation of vocational education programs is carried out by the local district with the assistance of appropriate state leadership and federal agencies. Fourth, state agencies responsible for vocational education provide leadership for evaluation of vocational education. Evaluating vocational programs and measuring their effectiveness is difficult. Vocational programs have different purposes and are offered by diverse institutions. Four measures to evaluate vocational education--components and process, occupational impact, equity, and individual student development--all present similar complications. Two issues that will affect vocational programs are weighting evaluation measures and choosing which programs to improve. The proposed Vocational and Adult Education Consolidation Act of 1983 has these components: a simplification of the current Vocational Education Act and provision for a single consolidated grant to each state. (YLB)

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EVALUATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE YEARS AHEAD

Perspectives from the Department of Education

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Spring Conference of VTAE Directors and Mid-Management Personnel
Madison, Wisconsin
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It is a pleasure to be here with you in Wisconsin today to discuss with you what's ahead for evaluation and accountability in vocational and adult education. In addition, I welcome this opportunity to brief you about our legislation proposal now being considered by the Congress.

I was here in Wisconsin at Wingspread just last month to participate in an International Conference on Technical Education. My remarks at that conference dealt with, among other items, exploring ways of creating new and productive ties between education and the private sector to improve skilled workforce development. Here in Wisconsin, you have put into practice that which President Reagan has urged others to do--forge partnerships. The White House Office of Private Sector Initiatives encourages voluntarism and promotes public-private sector partnerships.

I'd like to take a minute here to talk about excellence in light of the recent report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education. The report begins, "Our Nation is at risk. Our once unchallenged preeminence in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation is being overtaken by competitors throughout the world." The report continues, " ..while we can take justifiable pride in what our schools and colleges have historically accomplished and contributed to the United States and the well-being of its people, the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people."

Certainly the vocational education enterprise can take pride in its accomplishments--but although vocational education was not a specific target of the Commission's study, we cannot afford to be complacent. The jobs Americans have are changing--whole new industries are emerging, and we in vocational education must ensure that our programs prepare students for

the jobs of today and tomorrow. Economic survival and this Nation's capacity to become more productive are of paramount importance to President Reagan and to all of us. We, in vocational education, can contribute to our Nation's economic recovery, but not if our programs are mediocre! Not if our programs are not responsive to the skilled workforce demands of our changing society! As the commission stated, "Our goal must be to develop the talents of all to their fullest. Attaining that goal requires that we expect and assist all students to work to the limits of their capabilities." We must work closely with business, industry and labor--we must work together in developing our most precious resource--the human resource!

One program in particular that comes to mind is the Telephone Service and Repair Program at Wisconsin Indianhead Technical Institute. As you know, in 1982, this program received the Secretary's Award for Outstanding Vocational Education programs. This program, to prepare students for jobs in installation, maintenance, and repair in the telephone industry, is an example of what vocational education programs can and should be. Part of the reason for the excellence of this program is its evaluation component. The Indianhead District and the State conduct evaluations, the North Central Accreditation process involves evaluations, and a continuous evaluation of curriculum and instructional upgrading is maintained by an industry appointed advisory committee. Evaluations and evaluation concerns are not new for Wisconsin; they are an integral part of your education process and certainly predate our current Vocational Education legislation.

In 1977, the Wisconsin Board of Vocational, Technical, and Adult Education published a document entitled "Policy Statements for Vocational Education in Wisconsin." Recently, I reread this publication to review what your Board

had said. It is not unexpected that the concerns and approaches that your Wisconsin Board expressed are very similar to the concerns and approaches that we have in the Education Department.

I have selected four of these policy statements to discuss here because they reflect current concerns that are shared in the Office of Vocational and Adult Education and in the rest of the Education Department. (1) The first policy statement is "Vocational Education shall be held accountable to the various publics for the attainments of its goals and objectives." To whom--to the publics--is vocational education accountable? Local vocational education agencies are accountable to the State Board. But both State and local agencies are primarily accountable to students. Our entire vocational education system exists to meet the needs of our vocational education students. Vocational education is also accountable to private business and industries who hire our graduates. The presence of vocational programs often persuades an employer to locate in a given community. We have an obligation to continue to prepare our students for employment in these companies.

Traditionally, State agencies are accountable to the State and local legislators who authorize the funds to provide the education, the institutions, and the teachers. As a result of past legislation, the Federal Government is another public. States are now accountable to the Federal Government. This does not contribute to improving your programs or enhancing the education your students receive. Indeed, most of what is termed accountability is required paperwork to show compliance with complicated statutes and regulations. We anticipate new legislation to significantly reduce the accountability and compliance aspects of State-Federal relations.

Vocational Education now has additional publics, beyond students and State legislators to answer to. Under the provisions of the recently enacted Job Training Partnership Act, accountability for certain education and training responsibilities will be the responsibility of the governor and PICs--Private Industry Councils.

Private Industry Councils, in partnership with the local government, have the responsibility to provide policy guidance and exercise oversight for job training activities in the area. They will develop a job training plan. They will also reach agreement on how the plan will be implemented, on the entity to administer the program, and on the grant recipients for local job training funds. The primary consideration in selecting service providers will be demonstrated effectiveness in delivering comparable services. The governor has to approve the plan and may also prescribe variations to the Department of Labor established performance standards. If a local program is not satisfactory, the governor may impose a reorganization plan which may include the selection of an alternate entity to administer the program for the service delivery area.

We should as vocational educators be accountable for taking advantage of the opportunities available to vocational education under the Joint Training Partnership Act.

(2) The second policy statement from that publication I mentioned earlier is that although evaluation is a national concern, "evaluation systems for vocational education will be the responsibility of State and local units to maximize the vocational education benefit to society." This concept, of States being responsible for operations and decisions for subjects which are of national concern, is a key compenent of this Administration's goals.

When I spoke to the State Directors of Vocational Education, two years ago (Snowbird, Utah, September 21, 1981), I spoke of the "Administration's basic approach to the delivery of educational services: who should govern and who should deliver. Central to this approach is the return of operational authority--and indeed, most judgement calls--to the States and localities; to put it more bluntly, to phase out Federal intrusion into day-to-day educational matters and to redefine the Federal role as one of support and facilitation."

This leads to the third policy statement from your Board: (3) planning and implementation of vocational education programs shall be carried out by the local district with the assistance of appropriate State leadership and Federal agencies. We, at the Federal level, want to provide State and local agencies with assistance. Although we must continue to fulfill our duties in administering the current Act, there are many ways in which we plan to move from a "compliance" role to one of "facilitation." Here are some examples of what my office is trying to do:

--Provide States with the Programmatic Support Services that will help to Strengthen Programs - In FY 1982, approximately 7.5 million dollars was appropriated for Programs of National Significance. The Programs of National Significance support the functions of applied studies, curriculum development, demonstration, dissemination, and training. This will include not only our own on-site visits, as you may request them, but ensuring that products from our National Center for Research in Vocational Education and from the National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee are not only geared to your real needs, but are available to you in a timely, efficient manner. We must develop a better communication and diffusion system for your use.

--Provide National Coordination that will Expedite your Efforts to Address National Skill Training Goals - This includes acting as vocational education's "in-house" advocate with the Department, other Federal agencies, the White House, and the Congress. Also being your "point men" in negotiating agreements with other Federal agencies such as the Department of Defense and the Department of Labor-so as to ensure that vocational education has

a major role in their training programs, and overall, conducting the kind of effective, professional public relations effort that will educate all concerned regarding the contributions and benefits of your programs. (This paragraph and preceeding paragraph taken from speech to State Directors at Snowbird, Utah, September 1981.)

--Provide Greater Emphasis to Program Improvement Activities - This includes expanding OVAE's emphasis on program improvement; improving the relevance of occupationally specific programs by more closely involving the private sector in their planning, operation, and evaluation; finding and employing more effective means for improving programs in both urban centers and in sparsely populated rural areas; and incorporating emphasis on entrepreneurship education and on providing a skilled workforce ready to meet our defense needs in all vocational education programs.

We believe that our legislative proposal should provide the States as much flexibility as possible in deciding where to direct their Federal resources. The fourth, and last, policy statement I would like to comment on is "State agencies responsible for vocational education shall provide leadership for evaluation of vocational education programs, services, and activities."

The State Board has also been active in funding projects to evaluate vocational programs within your State. Evaluating vocational programs and measuring their effectiveness is a very difficult task. Vocational programs have many different purposes covering a wide range, from career guidance through career exploration to high skills training for technology intensive industries. The array of institutions alone is extremely diverse: vocational high schools, comprehensive high schools, public area vocational centers, private postsecondary institutions, community colleges and technical institutes, State correctional facilities, and correspondence schools.

In my testimony to the Commission on Excellence, Denver, Colorado, September 1982 Hearings on Education and Work, I said:

There would seem to be four kinds of measures currently used to evaluate vocational education: (1) components and process; (2) occupational impact; (3) equity; and (4) individual student development. Each of these carries a set of criteria, based on specialized research, and accumulated over the years. For example, (1) "components and process" criteria would include assessments of teacher qualifications, adequacy of shop facilities and equipment, and currency of curriculum materials, together with the degree to which proven instructional devices such as the "project method" are being used.

(2) "Occupational impact" criteria would include placement rates, pay rates, and employer evaluations, among others - in other words, the type of analysis largely favored by the labor economists for whom vocational education seems to have developed a special fascination over the past decade.

(3) "Equity" criteria are of more recent origin and have been generated by the civil rights movement that led to four major pieces of Federal legislation. It is more difficult to cite specific measures, in this case, except to say that for a significant number of persons who now "track" the vocational education enterprise, no program could be termed "excellent" that does not have some percentage of women, minorities, or handicapped.

(4) "Individual student development" criteria - reflecting the "whole person" concept of education - include such nonoccupational measures as frequency of voting, involvement in community affairs, and criminal record, among many others. This group of criteria reminds us that while vocational

education plays an important role in occupational skill training and retraining, it is also securely lodged within the overall education enterprise.

While it is not central to my discussion, I should point out that - in none of these measures - are we talking about the simple kind of precision that characterizes those in the physical sciences. In a recent article, Dr. Charles Benson of the University of California at Berkeley, touches on some of these measurement problems. Regarding "occupational impact criteria," for instance, he notes that, "If we wish to measure quality in terms of students' completions and placements, we must recognize that these data are very imperfectly reported. The same is true of data on employers' opinions of quality of training received by vocational graduates. Even if those kinds of data were widely available, it would be necessary to control for characteristics of entering students and for the state of the local labor market. Thus, the exercise is a complicated one."

Extending Professor Benson's comments, I would maintain that all of the criteria I have just suggested for measuring excellence present similar complications. I would next like to share with you what we perceive to be two issues that, over the long run, will greatly affect vocational programs.

These are two questions among others that we are pondering, together with a few comments:

(1) <u>How can we Evaluate our Programs in Sufficient Scope and Depth so as to really know where their Strengths and Weaknesses lie</u>? - This is actually a two-fold problem; first, it involves research, unperformed to date, on how to achieve the weighting of the different evaluation measures for the many different vocational programs; second, given the reality that we

have not done a comprehensive job of evaluating when we had more funds for research and evaluation, how can we do the same job more efficiently with the few dollars now available for research and evaluation?

(2) How can Systematic Decisions be made, on any Level, regarding which Program should take precedence over others, when two or more Programs are being Considered? - Even given the possibility that we can correctly identify all needed improvements for all programs, it will be financially impossible to address all of these, simultaneously. How then do we rationally choose between two valid choices such as - let us say - developing more effective cooperative programs for adults at the postsecondary level versus improving vocational guidance at the secondary level? We are conducting serious discussions with State and local leaders on these matters and will, of course, appreciate whatever suggestions you may give us.

The relationships between the States and the Federal Government are not one-way. We have a two-way relationship. I feel very comfortable asking you, and others, to comment upon questions we face and needs we perceive. We, in Washington, are dependent upon you to help us, by sharing with us your thoughts and reflections upon key issues.

Let me discuss now our legislative proposal, the Vocational and Adult Education Consolidation Act of 1983 which consolidates existing vocational and adult programs into a single program of grants to the States. It will reduce administrative burden and increase State and local flexibility over the use of funds. This bill was introduced to the Senate by Senator Hatch on April 13 and in the House on May 9 by Congressmen Erlenborn, Nielsen, Packard, and others.

The current Vocational Education Act is a maze of subprograms, set asides, and priorities, and in addition to mandating activities and goals, includes process requirements for sub-State allocation criteria. Our consolidation bill will be a great improvement over the existing legislation. The guiding principles in developing this bill were: (1) to simplify, increase flexibility, and reduce program costs at all levels of government, and (2) to redirect Federal support to focus on the role of vocational and adult education in economic development. Guided by those principles, we have fashioned a bill with the following components.

Part A, General Provisions, is a dramatic simplification of the parallel section of the current VEA. At least ninety-five percent of all funds will be made available to the States; up to 5 percent will be reserved for national program in areas of particular, nationwide importance. A proposed use report, replacing the existing plans, evaluations, and reports, will be required of each State on an annual basis. The report will include a simple explanation of proposed objectives, activities to be supported, and allocations of funds, as well as other basic assurances and descriptions. The existing VEA formula for State allotments (based on population and inverse per capita income) is modified to include an unemployment factor, target more heavily on older populations, and eliminate constraints on the income factor. The existing national advisory councils on adult and vocational education are replaced by a single national advisory council.

Part B of the Act concerns State programs. A single consolidated grant is made to each State. The existing VEA categorical programs for Program Improvement, Consumer and Homemaking Education, the Disadvantaged, State Planning, and State Advisory Councils are eliminated as are the set-asides for guidance and counseling and the special population groups. Also terminated are the VEA activities

for Immigrants, the Elderly, and Development and Dissemination as well as the State set-aside for Special Experimental Demonstration Projects and Teacher Training. Program matching, maintenance of effort, and most other fiscal accountability requirements are eliminated. From their grants, States are required to use at least 30 percent of the money for programs and projects specifically related to State and local economical development. This is the heart of the new direction in this legislation. From these funds, the States would support training needed for new businesses and industries or expanding old on their areas, retraining for skilled workers who have lost their jobs because of technological or economic changes, development of training programs in new occupational fields, and entrepreneurship training. In addition, the States are required to use at least 30 percent of their funds for strengthening State and local systems of vocational education. This requirement stems from a belief that improving the regular vocational education program can have a payoff in future economic growth. Finally, at least 13 percent of the State grant is to be used for adult basic education. This requirement will ensure that essential services to a very needy population are continued.

This bill would require that States use at least 15 percent of the funds they receive under Subpart 2 (Strengthening State and Local Systems of Vocational Education) to meet the needs of the handicapped. It also gives emphasis to sex equity activities, to retraining displaced workers, and to adult education services for the functionally illiterate.

Although this bill is quite similar to the Administration's proposed bill last year, there are some significant differences. Among them are:

--A set aside (15%) for the handicapped

--Added emphasis on sex equity provisions and activities

--The ceiling on State administrative costs was eliminated

It has been a privilege to speak with you today about our common concerns and how we hope to improve the practice of State and Federal administration of vocational education. If there are any questions, I would be happy to respond to them.